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- Web Development Guidelines

For a good site design we should:

- Provide well-illustrated with examples since designers go by the examples much more than body text make sure that the examples fully comply with the standard in all aspects and not just the one they are intended to illustrate (designers may pick up more than one hint from a given example)
- Provide extensive and comprehensive checklists as much as possible (designers prefer to scan down a list instead of having to read text) - for example, a list of all elements that must be on every page or a list of preferred terminology
- have a good index (if printed) or a good search supplemented with hypertext links to related rules (if online)

General web navigation and design

Ease of use will drive traffic. On a very high level these are some design ^{rules} we should keep in mind when building Venture Vortex. These ^{criteria} also serve as a our "rating" schema, if you will, for exemplar sites. ^{These sites will} provide the first set of requirements in the form of working examples.

1. Familiar interfaces and navigation techniques.

^{the} ^{Vortex} This really stresses the need to steal shamelessly from popular sites as an example of how to design VV. Data shows that users are incredibly impatient with unfamiliar territory. They have already suffered through learning how to operate their existing favorites and will not tolerate new learning.

(— There are two important issues in Web marketing:

1. Getting people to your site in the first place: that's what the advertising budget is for.
2. Making people stay on your site and convert them from one-time visitors to regular users: that's what the usability budget is or.

The business of a website is a product of two numbers:

$\text{number_visitors} \times \text{conversion_rate}$

Conversion rates are 1% → we need to focus here first. ^{is what}

- #### 2. Provide immediate gratification.
- ^{is what} ^{Deliver} The paradox of the active user → people would rather jump the gun and start getting something done than spend "unproductive" time up front on learning, studying the manual, and setting up their system.

VV needs hands-on tools that give the user a result for visiting the site. How-to guides, lengthy text, anything they have to take time out to learn or read about will turn them off.

- We must keep in mind that we are designing for the user – satisfy their needs
3. **Our purpose must be crystal-clear**
 Sites that aim to create a new category must present a crystal-clear positioning statement on the home page that focuses on what users will gain from using the site and why they should care about it. You get two lines to explain your value proposition.
 4. **Resist using multimedia to get attention** –streaming video, flashing or changing banners etc.
 The continued erroneous use of animation is starting to backfire: there is too much animation that has no usability benefits to the user but is simply used to try to attract attention to something that is irrelevant (usually advertising banners). Users have realized this and are now avoiding design elements that move in the belief that they are probably useless.
 5. **Delay our request for user information**
 - Customer registration (and anything else that gets in the way of allowing users to focus on what they want to do) should be minimized and made as easy and fast as possible; make sure that all such forms are usability tested.
 - Comply with the new Passport initiative and any other widely used mechanisms for allowing users to enter their data once and reuse it across the Web. Single log-in is a known usability requirement for all other systems, and we need it on the Web as well.
 - Postpone registration as far as possible into the usage process: if you ask too early before you have established your value to a new customer, you will simply turn away the prospect.

Here's a list of ten additional design elements that will increase usability:

1. Place your name and logo on every page and make the logo a link to the home page (except on the home page itself, where the logo should not be a link: never have a link that points right back to the current page.
2. Provide search if the site has more than 100 pages.
3. Write straightforward and simple headlines and page titles that clearly explain what the page is about and that will make sense when read out-of-context in a search engine results listing.
4. Structure the page to facilitate scanning and help users ignore large chunks of the page in a single glance: for example, use grouping and subheadings to break a long list into several smaller units.
5. Instead of cramming everything about a product or topic into a single, infinite page, use hypertext to structure the content space into a starting page that provides an overview and several secondary pages that each focus on a specific topic. The goal is to allow users to avoid wasting time on those subtopics that don't concern them.
6. Use product photos, but avoid cluttered and bloated product family pages with lots of photos. Instead have a small photo on each of the individual product pages and link the photo to one or more bigger ones that show as much detail as users need. This varies depending on type of product. Some products may even need zoomable or rotatable photos, but reserve all such advanced features for the secondary pages. The primary product page must be fast and should be limited to a thumbnail shot.
7. Use relevance-enhanced image reduction when preparing small photos and images: instead of simply resizing the original image to a tiny and unreadable thumbnail, zoom in on the most relevant detail and use a combination of cropping and resizing.

8. Use link titles to provide users with a preview of where each link will take them, before they have clicked on it.
9. Ensure that all important pages are accessible for users with disabilities, especially blind users.
10. Do the same as everybody else: if most big websites do something in a certain way, then follow along since users will expect things to work the same on your site. Remember Jakob's Law of the Web User Experience: users spend most of their time on other sites, so that's where they form their expectations for how the Web works.

Finally, always test your design with real users as a reality check. People do things in odd and unexpected ways, so even the most carefully planned project will learn from usability testing.

6. Navigation Conventions

- Blue text means "click here" on the Web, so by keeping unvisited links blue, there is no doubt in users' minds as to what they can do. The time they save by knowing what to do on a page is probably much bigger than the time they lose by having the few words in the hypertext anchors be a few milliseconds slower to read.
- Even more important, knowing the difference between unvisited (blue) and previously visited (purple) links helps users understand the structure of the website and their own navigation history. On sites that change the colors, we often observe users revisiting the same pages again and again because they do not realize that they have already seen those pages. The added confusion, substantial navigation delays, and reduced probability of ever finding the right page are all very severe usability penalties from changing the default link colors.
- Left justified Navigation Rail - the colored bar with multiple navigation choices. For a better design see CNET's current page which puts this at the top of the page. It helps reduce the % of pixels consumed by the navigation bar.
- Breadcrumb Trails - at the top of the page; looks like a directory structure and allows you to go directly back to the level in the hierarchy of your choosing. Works only if you have a hierarchical structure. Yahoo and CNET both use this.

Forcut 192

Content Navigation - how to direct the user where to go

Here are some ways of using prioritization to guide users:

- **For information:** Editorially select the most important stories or items. Give them bigger headlines or more prominent placement. Old principle which newspapers have used for more than a hundred years.
- **For product/services sales:** Use sales statistics to discover the best-selling products/services and place them on top of search listings. By definition, most customers will be looking for the best-sellers, so it is user-hostile to bury them in a search listing that is organized by some impenetrable information retrieval algorithm (or worse: sorted by SKU numbers or other internal attributes that don't matter to users). Look at the search results for "Palm" on Buy.com and you will see three best-sellers on top, followed by about 60 other products (other than good prioritization, Buy.com has a miserable search results page: hard to scan; weird abbreviations and symbols).
- **For popular areas:** Use server traffic to track areas of the site that are seeing unusually strong activity and place links to these areas on the home page: not only will you save users clicks, but it's also a way of making people aware of the current buzz. The Motley Fool does so to good

effect by keeping abreast of the activity of its many discussion boards and placing references to humming ones on a "hot topics" page that is linked from the home page (and summarized right on the home page).

- **For our experts feature:** Use reputation management to predict who will write the best contributions: if somebody was highly rated in the past, then their new material deserves featured placement. Epinions has reputation data that identifies the most trusted reviewers, and it gives high prominence to these writers' postings even before they have been rated by anybody.
- Simply highlight the most popular items in a list that is sorted by another criterion. I use this idea myself in my list of old Alertbox columns.
- On slowly changing pages (ones where the information remains relatively static), mark new items with a little "new" glyph. This is not necessary on pages that change all the time (say, newspaper home pages) since the assumption is that most items will be new on such pages.

Reputation Management

There are many examples of how reputation management is conducted. Examples of sites that perform reputation management as a means to improve usability are:

eBay.com

Google.com

Slashdot.com

Go

Third Voice

Epinions

Epinions is a double reputation manager: not only does it rate products and services, it also rates reviewers. After users have read a review, they are encouraged to vote on whether they found the review useful or not. In showing lists of reviews to users, Epinions places the most highly rated reviews on top, thus assuring that readers will focus on the best content. Also, reviewers build up status depending on the user feedback on all their reviews, meaning that people will be reluctant to contribute low-quality reviews to the service. A final interesting twist is that users earn a micropayment every time somebody reads one of their reviews. Thus, people are motivated to write valuable reviews, not just to gain a high reputation rating, but also to earn money.

Multiple interfaces

1. Specialized applications
2. Traditional web pages
3. Narrowly focused small devices

Probably not a concern for us currently since we don't have plans to place VV on wireless handheld devices. Version 2.0 of VV would fall into the Specialized Application category. At that time we need to attend to the design principles for this. It is important that they feel like variations of a single system, even though they have different designs:

- All system data should be the same across interfaces, even if not all information is shown in all versions. For example, prices should be the same, but a product listing may include only the best-selling items on a small screen with the rest relegated to a secondary "more products" page.

- All user information must be preserved across the interfaces: if I use one access mechanism today and another tomorrow, then the changes I made in one UI are reflected in what I see in the other.
- Unified login, user identification, and user profile (even though not all preference settings may apply to all UIs, those that do should be respected everywhere so that it is not necessary to manually define such preferences more than once).
- Same functionality and side-effects of commands, even if certain special features or variations are eliminated in some versions. For example, an airline reservation system may make choosing a flight and buying the ticket two separate steps. This separation should be preserved in all versions instead of having the simplified version unify choosing and buying into a single step. It would be OK to have the advanced version include additional features (such as specifying a seating preference) that were not in the simplified version. Missing these features is a trade-off that the user would make in return for the benefits of being able to use the system under various limited circumstances.

Metrics

How will we know if we've got it right. I'd like to suggest we use page views, not unique users, as one metric since loyal users will return multiple times and surf many pages if our content is found to be of value.

Marketing - the case against banner ads

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Rnk	Technique	Popularity	Effectiveness	
+-----+				
1.	Affiliate programs	17%	4.3	
2.	E-mail to customers	77	4.3	
3.	Public relations	45	4.1	
4.	Television	30	4.0	
5.	Outdoor	17	3.7	
6.	E-mail (opt-in lists)	23	3.5	
7.	Magazines	34	3.4	
8.	Radio	32	3.4	
9.	Direct mail	30	3.4	
10.	Sponsorships	34	3.3	
11.	Buttons	55	3.2	
12.	Banners	89	2.8	
13.	Newspapers	32	2.6	
+-----+				

Source: Apr. 1999 Forrester Research. Effectiveness ratings represent average scores based on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5

Survey of Web marketing executives by Forrester Research, April 1999.

Conclusions:

- eye-tracking studies find that users never even see the ads
- click-through rates dropping from 2% to 0.5% in a few years

- sales data from many sites showing that they usually don't sell a lot to those few users who do click through - paying customers usually arrive in other ways

The dropping click-through rate may be the single-most striking set of data in all Web research because the trend line is so clear and has been so consistent over the last three years. Continue the trend line out a few years (it will hit 0.1% by the end of 2000) and the conclusions are clear:

1. Don't build Internet business models that rely on sites getting substantial advertising revenues - except for huge sites: Yahoo can survive its current monetizing quotient (MQ) of 0.4 cents per page view because they have 310 million page views per day; you can't.
2. Don't make online advertising the center of the marketing plan for your own site - instead combine offline advertising with Internet-appropriate marketing methods like affiliate programs and email (to customers who ask to be notified; never send spam if you want a reputation as a reliable and high-trust site).

Affiliate Programs

The most famous affiliates program was introduced by Amazon.com with the launch of the Amazon Associates in July 1996. Amazon currently has about a quarter million sites in their affiliates program. In the case of Amazon, the referral fees work as follows:

- fees are only paid for users who buy books at Amazon during the visit that results after having followed a link from the affiliated site
- the fee is usually 5% of the sales, though it can be more for certain books if the site linked directly to the product page for that book

Other affiliates programs are more advanced and pay based on the life-time value of the referred customer and not just based on his or her initial purchase. It obviously requires more programming to keep track of users over time, but all marketing theory certainly tells us that life-time value is more important than individual sales

Other examples:

Autoweb.com (about 5,000 affiliate sites) pays \$5 for every referred user who ends up posting a used-car ad and

CarPrices.com (about 9,000 affiliate sites) pays \$3 for every referred user who asks for a price quote on a new car (whether or not they end up buying it - which does not seem to be tracked yet).

Value-add

- The destination site needs to be able to handle international customers and transition transparently between its different services, ensuring appropriate referral fees no matter which one the originating site links to.
- Targeted - don't recommend something you have no credibility on
- Every site should have a favorite books feature affiliated with Amazon or the like
- People want to buy locally

Problems

- lack of transparency and difficulty in finding and setting up affiliates programs. It is currently difficult to track down which sites offer affiliates programs, and many sites still don't have one.

- It is also difficult to judge the terms and conditions and to assess which programs are the most fair to the referring site. There are no standards for referral fees or easy ways of comparing different programs.
- There is still substantial overhead in signing up for affiliates programs. This is supposed to be a fully computerized process, but people still have to fill in forms manually every time they want to register for a new program. There is no centralized way of joining and managing affiliates programs. The overhead makes it infeasible for a site to join an affiliates program for a single link or a small deal.
- The destination site also has administrative overhead in mailing out many small checks since each destination site has to pay each referring site on its own.

Frequent-browser awards:

- **Reduced micro-payment fees.** If your site normally charges, say, 5 cents per pageview, you could give a discounted rate of 4 cents to anybody who racks up at least 100 pageviews, 3 cents to users with 1000 pageviews, and possibly even lower rates, down to maybe 0.01 cent for users with millions of pageviews. Such a discount program will shoot a hole through Nathan Myhrvold's complaint that micropayment schemes lead to "screwing your best customer."
- **Special access privileges for valued customers.** For example, they could be allowed to read a popular column before it is made available to the general public, or a music site could allow downloads of a special version of a soundtrack. It might also be possible to have discussion groups that are only open to high-volume users and thus not filled with postings by novice users. Remember, there are three main selling points in direct marketing: fear, greed, and exclusivity, so special privileges are a great way to motivate users to stay loyal.
- **Better server performance for users with many frequent-browser points.** The web server could give higher priority to serving requests from valued users so that they would get acceptable response times, even at times when the server is overloaded. The Web frequently sees so-called "flash crowds" where millions of users congregate at the same site with little notice (for example, because hot new software is available for download). It makes sense to dedicate most bandwidth to serving loyal customers and let the site tourists suffer.

Just as with airline loyalty programs, I expect that "frequent-browser points" might be earned in additional ways beyond sheer numbers of pageviews. For example, it is an obvious idea to award points to people buying products from your site and to people who try out a new service at an affiliated site ("follow this link and get 50 points").

Personalization:

A study by the Peppers and Rogers Group identified the following sites as offering state-of-the-art features:

+-----+-----+-----+			
Site	Feature	URL	
+-----+-----+-----+			
Amazon	Recommendations	amazon.com	
	System		
Cisco	Customizable	cisco.com	
	Online Knowledge		
	Base		

Dell	Online Product	dell.com	
	Configurator		
Lands End	Personal Model	landsend.com	
Peapod	Recipe Generator	peapod.com	
S&P Personal	Asset Allocator	personalwealth.com	
Wealth			
Amazon	1-Click Ordering	amazon.com	
	System		
Ticketmaster	Online Viewer	ticketmaster.com	
The Wall Street	Personal Journal	wsj.com	
Journal			
E*TRADE	Instant Alerts	etrade.com	

Source: 1999 Peppers and Rogers Group

Checklist of Don'ts

1. Breaking or Slowing Down the Back Button
2. Opening New Browser Windows
3. Non-Standard Use of GUI Widgets
3. Lack of Biographies
4. Lack of Archives
5. Moving Pages to New URLs
6. Headlines That Make No Sense Out of Context

the writing needs to be very plain and meet two goals:

- tell users what's at the other end of the link with no guesswork required
- protect users from following the link if they would not be interested in the destination page (so no teasers - they may work once or twice to drive up traffic, but in the long run they will make users abandon the site and reduce its credibility)

7. Jumping at the Latest Internet Buzzword
8. Slow Server Response Times
9. Anything That Looks Like Advertising

it is best to avoid any designs that look like advertisements. The exact implications of this guideline will vary with new forms of ads; currently follow these rules:

- **banner blindness** means that users never fixate their eyes on anything that looks like a banner ad due to shape or position on the page
- **animation avoidance** makes users ignore areas with blinking or flashing text or other aggressive animations
- **pop-up purges** mean that users close pop-up windoids before they have even fully rendered; sometimes with great viciousness.

Establishing Trust

1. seals of approval (TRUSTe, etc.) and brand reputation.
2. Appropriate use of technology from encryption to download speed also matters: users feel that a professionally run server can be trusted more than one that feels like it could break at any time. When customers encounter technical difficulties at a previously preferred site, their reactions are:
 - 29% continued loyalty (user tries again later)

- 52% split loyalty (found a different site: future use alternates between the original site and the new site)
- 19% abandon the site forever

3. Communicate Trustworthiness

The design itself can communicate trustworthiness in four ways:

- **Design quality:** professional appearance feels solid; clear navigation conveys respect for customers and an implied promise of good service. Typos or difficult navigation communicate disregard for the users.
- **Up-front disclosure** of all aspects of the customer relationship. For example, reveal shipping charges immediately rather than waiting until after the user has placed an order. You may cheat a few people into ordering by hiding the shipping costs, but many more will abandon the site at an early stage of the process.
- **Comprehensive, correct, and current content** and product selection feel solid. If a site has product photos, it should have good shots of all products. Haphazard, random content signal a brittle service.
- **Connected to the rest of the Web** with links in and out. Not being afraid to link to other sites is a sign of confidence, and third-party sites are much more credible than anything you can say yourself. Isolated sites feel like they have something to hide.

4. Sensitive Use of E-Mail

Any time you have a need for capturing a user's email address, it is necessary to provide full disclosure of what will the address be used for. It is also necessary to give users the ability to control how much email they will be getting. For example, it should be possible for a user to place an order and be assured that the only email he or she will receive would be clarifications or confirmations of the order.

- **Content and Resource Pages**

Purpose

This section of the site is intended to help guide an entrepreneur step-by-step thru the process of rapidly establishing the infrastructure and early non-specific operations of a new company.

Interface

The top level interface will be a timeline. The lower-level interface will be either a checklist or bulletpoint list. SEE <http://www.vcapital.com>

The initial section will contain the overall 12 step "Venture Creation Roadmap" taken from Diamond Technology Partners advisor S. Nathwani, and refined by founders. The implied sequence needs to be harmonized with the reality of starting a new venture from scratch, and my argument is we should use our specific experience in starting VV as the benchmark:

1. Register domain name /Incorporate
2. Raise Capital
3. Get web development, CID svcs
4. Get website online/ecommerce enabled
5. Select bank products

6. Apply for Amex, Visa/MC and other cards
7. Set up accounting system and/or get outsourced accounting svcs
8. Find temps/freelancers/interns/mentors
9. Get office share/sublet or executive suite or space in incubator
10. Get connectivity from free ISP or ASP
11. Get free computers, low-cost furniture and office supplies
12. Get executive recruiter

Functionality

This section must allow users to

Page Template for Section

The sub-sections below this initial section will all follow the same template. Each page will contain a combination of static or background content, dynamic content, and links to selected (2-4) affiliate partners. Page weight is distributed as follows: XXXX

SEE <http://www.bizzed.com> for basic template we wish to follow.

Static Content- get from kaufmann foundation (www.entreworld.org) or from other small business (SB) websites, eg www.digitalwork.com, www.allbusiness.com

1. Business plan writing
2. Marketing
3. Finance
4. Management
5. Deal structures and negotiation

Dynamic Content- get from Screaming Media or similar company (www.screamingmedia.com); 2-3 articles per day in each of the five categories above, archived and searchable for 90 days

Other considerations:

First page in each sub-section has link to pre-loaded search for subject-specific books (amazon.com) and contract templates (contractedge.com)

Sub-section: Register domain name /Incorporate

- background information re: tips and tricks for registering names (.com, .net,.org; all caps etc), types of corporate structure and corresponding filings; eneral legal info (from ??? legal site or portal; one of the SB portals)
- selected article(s) from content feed
- links to:
 - BizFilings (www.bizfilings.com)
 - Register.com (www.register.com)
 - Network Solutions (www.networksolutions.com)

4. Instant Gratification tool: incorporate a search box for domain name availability on this page.
SEE <http://www.bcentral.com> (Microsoft)

Sub-section: Raise capital

1. background information re: equity vs debt financing; angel investment; importance of the value-added early stage investment; smart vs dumb money etc (from kaufman or SB portal).
2. selected article(s) from content feed
3. links to:
 - Sample Bplan and Financials (from Moneyhunter www.moneyhunter.com)
 - NYNMA angel investors program (www.nynma.org)
 - Tech capital network of MIT (www.tcnmit.org 617 253 7163)
 - Capital network, Austin, Texas (512 305 0826)
 - Alleycat News investor salons (www.alleycatnews.com)
 - BusinessFinance (www.businessfinance.com)
 - FinanceHub (www.financehub.com)
 - Loanwise (www.loanwise.com)

Sub-section: Build Website and CID set (logo, letterhead and business cards)

1. background information re: websites, design, and importance of CID for brand building (from ???; can bernhard supply this info?)
2. selected article(s) from content feed
3. links to:
 - Creative Freelancers (www.freelancers.com)
 - Easy Printers (www.easiest.com)

Sub-section: Get Website ecomm enabled

- background information re: free websites and ecommerce and online catalog building services (from bizzed.com, webmonkey.com and recent WSJ website and devpt insert)
- selected article(s) from content feed
- links to free ecomm portals, catalog portals:
 - Amazon Zshops (www.amazon.com/zshops) [Note—im not sure about this one; seems more suited for consumer or momandpop type biz]
 - Bigstep (www.bigstep.com)
 - Freemerchant (www.freemerchant.com)
 - ECongo (www.econgo.com)
 - Hotbiz (www.hotbiz.com)
 - Affinia (www.affinia.com)
 - Emerging.com (www.emerging.com)
 - ICat (www.icat.com)
 - Excitestorebuilder(www.excite.com/storebuilder)

Sub-section: Select bank products

1. background information re: types of bank services and products of value to a small business (from kaufman or SB portal)
2. selected article(s) from content feed
3. links to hi-tech banks, banks making aggressive loan push in tech sector of middle market:
 - Silicon Valley Bank (www.svb.com)
 - Fleet Bank (www.fleet.com)
 - Wingspan bank (www.wingspan.com) [not sure on this]
 - Netbank (www.netbank.com)
 - Citibank online (www.citibank.com)
 - Chase online (www.chase.com)
 - Wells Fargo online (www.wellsfargo.com)
 - Bank One online financial center (www.bankone.com)

Sub-section: Apply for Amex, Visa/MC and other cards

1. background information re: types of credit card services and products of value to a small business in capital raising, making company purchases, accounting for T+E etc (from kaufman or SB portal)
2. selected article(s) from content feed
3. links to card companies making aggressive push in small business market or tech sector of middle market:
 - American Express small business exchange (home3.americanexpress.com/smallbusiness)
 - Visa/MasterCard (www.mastercard.com/business/smalbiz)
 - Diners Card (www.citibank.com/dinersus)
 - AT+T Universal Card (www.universalbusinesscard.com)

Sub-section: Set up accounting system and/or get outsourced accounting svcs

1. background information re: basic bookkeeping and accounting processes; GAAP vs FASB; acctg for intellectual property (software); role of management account in successful small business (from kaufman or SB portal)
2. selected article(s) from content feed
3. links to accounting software companies and outsourced accounting services companies:
 - Quicken (www.quicken.com)
 - QuickBooks (www.quickbooks.com)
 - CFO online (www.cfo.com) [not sure if this is launched yet; basically it's a portal for CFOs]
 - Virtual Growth (www.vgrowth.com)

- Ernst&Young Erny service (www.erny.com)

Sub-section: Find temps/freelancers/interns/mentors

1. background information re: using temps, independent contractors, consultants, interns to perform needed work, while minimizing risk from scaling HR too early. (from kaufman or SB portal)
2. selected article(s) from content feed
3. links to online HR, resume databases, job boards companies that focus on (have section devoted to) freelancers and consultants, esp w/ tech or new media bent:
 - eLance (www.elance.com)
 - HotJobs (www.hotjobs.com)
 - NYNMA job board (www.nynma.org/jobs)
 - Fuel SBA (www.fuelsba.com)
 - Monsterboard (www.monsterboard.com)
 - Jobs.com (www.job.com)
 - Career Mosaic (www.careermosaic.com)
 - NetTemps (www.net-temps.com)
 - RecruitUSA (www.recruitusa.com)
 - Techies.com (www.techies.com)
 - Webhire (www.webhire.com)
 - Internship.com (www.internship.com)
 - JobTrak (www.jobtrak.com)
 - SCORE

Sub-section: Get office share/sublet or executive suite or space in incubator

1. background information re: need to move out of home and into professional space in order to coalesce team and organization;; build teamwork and corporate culture etc. ; possible community benefits of being near other startups. Comment on "virtual office space" (from kaufman or SB portal)
2. selected article(s) from content feed
3. links to online office share/sublease; executive suites (business center), incubator, virtual office and online moving companies:
 - Offices2Share (www.offices2share.com)
 - NY Times online (www.nytimes.com)
 - Village Voice online (www.villagevoice.com)
 - LA Times online (www.latimes.com)
 - Boston Globe online (www.bostoncom/globe)
 - SF Chronicle online (www.sfchronicle.com)
 - Space Place (SF) (www.mihailovich.com)
 - Office Sapce.com (Seattle/Portland) (www.officespace.com)
 - San Jose Mercury online (www.siliconvalley.com)
 - Regus (www.regus.com)

- HQ (www.hqnet.com)
- Esuites (www.esuite.com)
- National Business Incubation Assoc. (www.nbia.org)
- YourOffice (www.youroffice.com)
- Move.com (www.move.com)
- MoversNet (www.usps.com/moversnet)

Sub-section: Get connectivity and applications from free ISP or ASP

1. background information re: cashflow benefits of sing free ISPs and ASPs for basic connectivity, ecommerce, software devpt and messaging applications (from ZD net article and frank ruscica interview)
2. selected article(s) from content feed
3. links to free ISP and ASP companies:
 - MyWebOS (www.mywebos.com)
 - Metconnect (www.metconnect.com)
 - Worldspy (www.worldspy.com)
 - Webcombo (www.americaisp.com)
 - Bigger.net
 - Brigadoon (www.brigadoon.com)
 - NetZero (www.netzerocom)
 - Tritium Network
 - Freewwwweb/ Freewwway (www.freewwway.com)
 - US Internetworking
 - BidCom
 - Blueline Online
 - Portera Systems
 - Folio
 - 1. Shaw
 - 4. ConvergeNet
 - Internet Hypermart (free-internet.hypermart.net)
 - ISPs.com (www.isps.com)

Sub-section: Get free computers, low-cost furniture and office supplies

1. background information re: need to rapidly establish physical infrastructure and minimzie costs; doing online pushes dow the skils et requirements for mantaining/extending office, lowers salary costs. (kaufman or SB portal)
2. selected article(s) from content feed
3. links to free computer, online office supply companies, distributed shopping agents companies:
 - Gobi (www.gobi.com)
 - FreePC (www.freepc.com)
 - EMachines (www.emachines.com)

- BuyerZone (www.buyerzone.com)
- Bizrate (www.bizrate.com)
- Active Buyers Guide (www.activebuyersguide.com)
- Click the Button (www.clickthebutton.com)
- Deal pilot (www.dealpilot.com)
- Dash (www.dash.com)

Sub-section: Get executive recruiter

THIS SECTION LEFT BLANK; DETAILS TBD AFTER SEQUENCE OF VENTURE CREATION ROADMAP IS FINALIZED

4. The VentureBuilder Tool

Purpose

This section of the site is intended to enable the foundation layer of a rapidly expanding community of diverse players related to the business of venture creation: researchers/tech innovators, software developers, consumers/end users, entrepreneurs/management teams and finance/sales/marketing teams.

Interface

The top level interface is still under consideration, but certain relevant principles (in addition to those mentioned in section 1 above) will limit choices:

1. should be a harmonious extension or complement of the timeline/checklist interface
2. ease of use (data entry, updates, responses etc) and perceived security are mandatory
3. filtering/screening of respondents (to optimize average value of interactions) would be preferable

Relevant interfaces for study may be found at sites that correspond to the three different components.

HTML self publishing—

<http://www.yahoo.geocities.com>

<http://www.goodstory.com>

<http://www.canadait.com/cfm/index.cfm?It=102&Id=1&Se=0&Lo=2>

Bulletin Boards/Networking sites

<http://www.sixdegrees.com>

<http://www.oursquare.com>

Reputation management

There are many examples of how reputation management is conducted. Examples of sites that perform reputation management as a means to improve usability are:

eBay.com

Google.com

Slashdot.com

Go

Third Voice

Epinions

Epinions is a double reputation manager: not only does it rate products and services, it also rates reviewers. After users have read a review, they are encouraged to vote on whether they found the review useful or not. In showing lists of reviews to users, Epinions places the most highly rated reviews on top, thus assuring that readers will focus on the best content. Also, reviewers build up status depending on the user feedback on all their reviews, meaning that people will be reluctant to contribute low-quality reviews to the service. A final interesting twist is that users earn a micropayment every time somebody reads one of their reviews. Thus, people are motivated to write valuable reviews, not just to gain a high reputation rating, but also to earn money.

Functionality

This tool must allow entrepreneurs to market non-confidential descriptions of their business concepts and operations, as well as focused requests for information, financial capital, products, services and employees. The basic functionality seems to require a composite of three applications:

- self publishing tool
- bulletin board/ online networking/ instant messaging (?) tool
- reputation management database

The basic functionality for the self publishing tool is:

- enable document (bplans, executive summaries, RFPs) publishing via template(s) driven HTML tool
- easy to revise, update
- (perception of) adequate security

The basic functionality for the bulletin board/networking tool is:

- enable question,message, rfp etc publishing
- multiple threads?
- archive?
- Allow expedited connection to selected external sites for information exchange, eg Question Exchange for tech issues and Exp.com for business issues. [Being discussed internally as "1-click due diligence"]

The basic functionality for the reputation management tool is:

- enable publishing,tracking, retrieval of reviews on members' performance
- categorize (by issue), rank and identify best work product of members
- guide users publishing requests to selected members, based on past performance in a relevant area

User Interaction Maps

Specifically, the desired interactions among target users on the site can be represented as follows:

[NOTE: AS OF 1/6, S.NATHWANI CURRENTLY DRAFTING USER INTERACTION MAPS]

Page Template for Section
[TO BE DETERMINED]

When: 11/16/99 7:30pm EST
Location: via Teleconference
Attendees:

Garnet Heraman
Tom Kane
Sanjiv Nathwani
Lisa Smith

Bernhard Kappe
Paul Mealey

Topics:

Communication Plan
Venture Vortex Business Strategy
Competitive Analysis
V1.0 Project Plan

Communication Plan

Agreed that there will be a single point of communication between VV and PFA for all strategic issues. This will be Garnet for VV and Bernhard for PFA.

Agreed that Lisa is the sole master of the tactical plan for VV.

On tactical Issues, there will also be a single point of communication. That will be Lisa for VV and Paul for PFA.

Going forward, PFA will be in charge of driving all meetings, and generating call reports and action plans.

Venture Vortex Business Strategy

The V1.0 site needs to have enough "stickiness" so that people will not automatically pass through the site to go somewhere else.

Agreed that for V1.0, a unique aggregation of information has value for the target community.

Agreed that it is well enough for people to pass through the site, as long as there is enough information to make the site compelling.

V1.0 can be a front end; a place to develop a good foundation.

Agreed that V1.0 must have enough customization to provide for an engaging user experience.

The site must be designed to trap enough extended user data to do meaningful user profiling.

Articulated that the target market is entrepreneurs looking to create businesses in his/her area.

It is a "lifestyle" that VV is targeting.

VV and PFA need to provide enough data with which to develop a budget.

VV would like ad banners on the site, to give the impression of activity.

Competitive Analysis

While an adequate job was done on this document, the team agreed to spend next few days in review of competitive analysis, and regroup later.

Project Plan

Lisa tasked with reviewing project plan over next 48 hours, and getting back to Paul and Bernhard on it with questions.

Project Plan will be reviewed in more depth at that point.

PFA needs to understand the impact that the market analysis will have on the project plan, as this has as not yet been discussed.